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REMARKS

A. The Section 112 Rejections

The Applicants appreciate the Examiner's withdrawal of the rejections under 35 U.S.C. §112.

B. The Section 102 Rejections

Claims 1, 3-7, 9-15 and 17 were once again rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(a) based on an article authored by Wei et al. (hereinafter "Wei"). Applicants disagree and traverse these rejections for at least the following reasons.

Each of the claims of the present invention includes the feature of, among other things, sending a connection setup message to a next node at *substantially the same time as a cross-connect is initiated*.

In contrast, Wei appears to send a SETUP message after a cross-connect is initiated (e.g., after a time period, t_p).

In the Final Office Action the Examiner appears to take the position that the time period, t_p , in Wei is unrelated to a cross-connect. Instead, the Examiner prefers the time period t_c . However, both t_p and t_c are related to cross-connects.

In Figure 4 of Wei, a cross-connection SETUP message is sent by a "source" and is received at a first intermediate node. After a time period t_p has elapsed, the SETUP message is sent from the first node to the next hop node where the process is repeated (i.e., t_p elapses before the SETUP message is forwarded onward). From Figure 4, the time period t_p is depicted as being a